

INTRODUCTION

James 5:14-15 Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

(<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/james/5>, 2024)

I heard Fr. Wade Menezes, CPM, speaking about “THE FOUR LAST THINGS: DEATH, JUDGEMENT, HEAVEN AND HELL” recently. He expressed concerns that many Catholics are not receiving end of life ministries and blessings that they deserve. His observation was that family members are not fully aware of the wealth of ministries that is available.

Besides Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum (Final Communion: means “Food for the Journey”) there are blessings and prayers that families can say together near death and even right

after death that are so rich and meaningful.

If you have pre-planned your funeral with a funeral home, you can also pre-plan your funeral Mass. Picking readings and hymns that mean something to you can relieve your family of this burden and make the Mass more meaningful.

Make your plans and pass this information on to your family members. Have them call your parish office so your pastor can visit, pray and anoint you and have them call again when death has occurred.

Anointing of the Sick is not just for the Dying

Anointing of the Sick is one of those sacraments that can be received more than once. What is required is that a person have a serious illness or will be undergoing a serious medical procedure. The aim of this book is to educate and allay the fears of all regarding the non-finality of the sacrament and the beautiful funeral rites.

Please use this resource as a means to grow comfortable with availing yourself

of the fruits of this sacrament as well as educate family members of your last liturgical and sacramental wishes.

Bereavement and Funerals

Because of our belief not only in the immortality of the soul, but also in the resurrection of the body, the Church professes hope in the face of death, and acts with charity in the funeral rites. The Church provides a number of prayers for the faithful to offer both to accompany the dying of a loved one and to strengthen our faith upon their death. Through private prayer and public funeral rites, we strengthen our faith and hope, comfort those who mourn, and bury the bodily remains of the deceased with care befitting what was the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

The following excerpts are taken from the General Introduction of the *Order of Christian Funerals*:

(<https://www.crookston.org/documents/ministriesoffices/worship-a-liturgy/funerals-a-burial/973-order-of-christian-funerals-introduction/file>, 2009)

4. At the death of a Christian, whose life of faith was begun in the waters of baptism and strengthened at the

eucharistic table, the Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased because of its confident belief that death is not the end, nor does it break the bonds forged in life. The Church also ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them in the funeral rites with the comforting word of God and the sacrament of the eucharist.

5. Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just. The Mass, the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral.

6. The Church through its funeral rites commends the dead to God's merciful love and pleads for the forgiveness of their sins. At the funeral rites, especially at the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice, the Christian community affirms and expresses the union of the Church on earth with the Church in heaven in the one great communion of saints. Though separated from the living, the dead are still at one with the community of believers on earth and benefit from their prayers and

intercession. At the rite of final commendation and farewell, the community acknowledges the reality of separation and commends the deceased to God. In this way it recognizes the spiritual bond that still exists between the living and the dead and proclaims its belief that all the faithful will be raised up and reunited in the new heavens and a new earth, where death will be no more.

Canon 1176 from the Code of Canon Law states, "Deceased members of the Christian faithful must be given ecclesiastical funerals according to the norm of law." Others who are eligible for an ecclesiastical funeral include:

- Catechumens
- Children whom the parents intended to baptize but who died before baptism, and
- "In the prudent judgment of the local ordinary, ecclesiastical funerals can be granted to baptized persons who are enrolled in a non-Catholic Church or ecclesial community unless their intention is evidently to the

contrary and provided that their own minister is not available" (Canon 1183.3). (2024)

Prayers for Death and Dying

"The Christian meaning of death is revealed in the light of the Paschal Mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Christ in whom resides our only hope. The Christian who dies in Christ Jesus is 'away from the body and at home with the Lord' (2 Cor 5:8)."

Prayers with the Dying

The following prayers may be recited with the dying person, alternating with times of silence. Sometimes, the same prayer should be repeated many times. The Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be are also appropriate. The dying person may be signed on the forehead with the cross, as was done at Baptism.

Short Texts

What will separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom 8:35)

Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. (Rom 14:8)

We shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thes 4:17)

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. (Ps 25:1)

Though I should walk in the valley of the shadow of death, no evil would I fear, for you are with me. (Ps 23:4)

Into your hands I commend my spirit. (Ps 31:6a)

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. (Lk 23:42)

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. (Acts 7:59)

Holy Mary, pray for me.

Saint Joseph, pray for me.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Scripture Readings

Those gathered might take turns reading these passages.

Job 19:23-27

Oh, would that my words were written down!

Would that they were inscribed in a record:

That with an iron chisel and with lead
they were cut in the rock forever!

As for me, I know that my vindicator
lives,

and that he will at last stand forth upon
the dust.

This will happen when my skin has been
stripped off,

and from my flesh I will see God:

I will see for myself,

my own eyes, not another's, will behold
him:

my inmost being is consumed with
longing.

Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.

In green pastures he makes me lie down;
to still waters he leads me;
he restores my soul.

He guides me along right paths

for the sake of his name.
Even though I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff comfort me.
You set a table before me
in front of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Indeed, goodness and mercy* will pursue
me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the LORD
for endless days.

Psalm 91

***A prayer of someone who has taken
refuge in the Lord, possibly within
the Temple. The psalmist is
confident that God's presence will
protect the people in every
dangerous situation. The final verses
are an oracle of salvation promising
salvation to those who trust in God.***

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shade of the Almighty,
Say to the LORD, "My refuge and fortress,
my God in whom I trust."

He will rescue you from the fowler's snare,
from the destroying plague,
He will shelter you with his pinions,
and under his wings you may take refuge;
his faithfulness is a protecting shield.

You shall not fear the terror of the night
nor the arrow that flies by day,
Nor the pestilence that roams in darkness,
nor the plague that ravages at noon.
Though a thousand fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
near you it shall not come.

You need simply watch;

the punishment of the wicked you will see.

Because you have the LORD for your refuge

and have made the Most High your stronghold,

No evil shall befall you,

no affliction come near your tent.

For he commands his angels with regard to you,

to guard you wherever you go.

With their hands they shall support you,

lest you strike your foot against a stone.

You can tread upon the asp and the viper,

trample the lion and the dragon.

Because he clings to me I will deliver him;

because he knows my name I will set him on high.

He will call upon me and I will answer;

I will be with him in distress;

I will deliver him and give him honor.

With length of days I will satisfy him,
and fill him with my saving power.

Psalm 121

*A blessing given to someone
embarking on a dangerous journey
whether a soldier going on a
campaign or a pilgrim returning
home from the Temple. People look
anxiously at the wooded hills. Will
God protect them on their journey?
The speaker declares that God is not
confined to a place or a time, that
every step is guarded; night and day
God watches over their every
movement.*

I raise my eyes toward the mountains.

From whence shall come my help?

My help comes from the LORD,
the maker of heaven and earth.

He will not allow your foot to slip;
or your guardian to sleep.

Behold, the guardian of Israel
never slumbers nor sleeps.

The LORD is your guardian;

the LORD is your shade
at your right hand.

By day the sun will not strike you,
nor the moon by night.

The LORD will guard you from all evil;
he will guard your soul.

The LORD will guard your coming and
going
both now and forever.

1 John 4:16

***What Christ is gives us confidence,
even as we live and love in this
world. Yet Christian love is not
abstract but lived in the concrete
manner of love for one another.***

We have come to know and to believe in
the love God has for us.

God is love, and whoever remains in love
remains in God and God in him.

Revelation 21:1-7

The New Heaven and the New Earth

Then I saw a new heaven and a new
earth. The former heaven and the former

earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people^{*} and God himself will always be with them [as their God].

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away.”

The one who sat on the throne^{*} said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Then he said, “Write these words down, for they are trustworthy and true.”

He said to me, “They are accomplished.[†] I [am] the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give a gift from the spring of life-giving water.

The victor will inherit these gifts, and I shall be his God, and he will be my son.

Matthew 25:1-13

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them,

but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.

Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.

The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.'

While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked.

Afterwards the other virgins came and said, ‘Lord, Lord, open the door for us!’

But he said in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.’

Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Luke 22:39-46

The Agony in the Garden.

Then going out he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him.

When he arrived at the place he said to them, “Pray that you may not undergo the test.”

After withdrawing about a stone’s throw from them and kneeling, he prayed,

saying, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done.” [And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him. He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat

became like drops of blood falling on the ground.]

When he rose from prayer and returned to his disciples, he found them sleeping from grief.

He said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not undergo the test.”

Luke 23:44-49

The Death of Jesus.

It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon

because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle.

Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”; and when he had said this he breathed his last.

The centurion who witnessed what had happened glorified God and said, “This man was innocent beyond doubt.”

When all the people who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had

happened, they returned home beating their breasts;

but all his acquaintances stood at a distance, including the women who had followed him from Galilee and saw these events.

Luke 24:1-8

The Resurrection of Jesus.

But at daybreak on the first day of the week they took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb;

but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

While they were puzzling over this, behold, two men in dazzling garments appeared to them.

They were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground. They said to them, "Why do you seek the living one among the dead?

He is not here, but he has been raised.^{*} Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee,

that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and rise on the third day.”

And they remembered his words.

John 6:37-40

From the Bread of Life Discourse

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me,

38because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.

39And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it [on] the last day.^t

40For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him [on] the last day.”

John 14:16, 23, 27

From the Last Supper Discourses

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always,

23 Jesus answered and said to him, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

Prayer of Commendation

As the time of death approaches, this prayer may be said.

Go forth, Christian soul, from this world

in the name of God the almighty Father,

who created you,

in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,

who suffered for you,

in the name of the Holy Spirit,

who was poured out upon you,
go forth, faithful Christian.

May you live in peace this day,
may your home be with God in Zion,
with Mary, the Virgin Mother of God,
with Joseph, and all the Angels and
Saints.

Prayers after Death

Prayer for the Dead

In your hands, O Lord,
we humbly entrust our brothers and
sisters.

In this life you embraced them with your
tender love;
deliver them now from every evil
and bid them eternal rest.

The old order has passed away:
welcome them into paradise,
where there will be no sorrow, no
weeping or pain,
but fullness of peace and joy
with your Son and the Holy Spirit

forever and ever.

R/. Amen.

Prayers Immediately after Death

The following prayers may be recited immediately after death and may be repeated in the hours that follow.

Saints of God, come to his/her aid!

Come to meet him/her, Angels of the Lord!

R/. Receive his/her soul and present him/her to God the Most High.

May Christ, who called you, take you to himself;

may Angels lead you to Abraham's side.
R/.

Give him/her eternal rest, O Lord,
and may your light shine on him/her forever. R/.

Let us pray.

All-powerful and merciful God,
we commend to you N., your servant.
In your mercy and love,
blot out the sins he/she has committed

through human weakness.
In this world he/she has died:
let him/her live with you forever.
Through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.

These verses may also be used.

V/. Eternal rest grant unto him/her, O
Lord.

**R/. And let perpetual light shine
upon him/her.**

V/. May he/she rest in peace.

R/. Amen.

V/. May his/her soul and the souls of all
the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God,
rest in peace.

R/. Amen.

An Overview of Catholic Funeral Rites

"At the death of a Christian, whose life of
faith was begun in the waters of Baptism

and strengthened at the Eucharistic table, the Church intercedes on behalf of the deceased because of its confident belief that death is not the end, nor does it break the bonds forged in life. The Church also ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them in the funeral rites with the comforting Word of God and the Sacrament of the Eucharist."

(Order of Christian Funerals, no. 4)

The Catholic funeral rite is divided into several stations, or parts, each with its own purpose. For this reason, we recommend following the complete structure and making use of each station.

Vigil Service (Wake)

"At the vigil, the Christian community keeps watch with the family in prayer to the God of mercy and finds strength in Christ's presence" (Order of Christian Funerals, no. 56). The Vigil Service usually takes place during the period of visitation and viewing at the funeral home. It is a time to remember the life of the deceased and to commend him/her to God. In prayer we ask God to console us in our grief and give us strength to support one another.

The Vigil Service can take the form of a Service of the Word with readings from Sacred Scripture accompanied by reflection and prayers. It can also take the form of one of the prayers of the Office for the Dead from the *Liturgy of the Hours*. The clergy and your funeral director can assist in planning such service.

It is most appropriate, when family and friends are gathered together for visitation, to offer time for recalling the life of the deceased. For this reason, eulogies are usually encouraged to be done at the funeral home during visitation or at the Vigil Service.

Funeral Liturgy

The funeral liturgy is the central liturgical celebration of the Christian community for the deceased. When one of its members dies, the Church encourages the celebration of the funeral liturgy at a Mass. When Mass cannot be celebrated, a funeral liturgy outside Mass can be celebrated at the church or in the funeral home.

At the funeral liturgy, the Church gathers with the family and friends of

the deceased to give praise and thanks to God for Christ's victory over sin and death, to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the Paschal Mystery. The funeral liturgy, therefore, is an act of worship, and not merely an expression of grief.

Rite of Committal (Burial or Interment)

The Rite of Committal, the conclusion of the funeral rite, is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member. It should normally be celebrated at the place of committal, that is, beside the open grave or place of interment. In committing the body to its resting place, the community expresses the hope that, with all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection. The Rite of Committal is an expression of the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven: the deceased passes with the farewell prayers of the community of believers into the welcoming company of

those who need faith no longer but see God face-to-face.

Gathering in the Presence of the Body

When the family first gathers around the body, before or after it is prepared for burial, all or some of the following prayers may be used. It is most fitting that, where possible, family members take part in preparing the body for burial.

All make the Sign of the Cross. Then one member of the family reads:

My brothers and sisters, Jesus says:

"Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened,

and I will give you rest.

Shoulder my yoke and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.

Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light."

The body may then be sprinkled with holy water:

The Lord God lives in his holy temple yet abides in our midst.

Since in Baptism, N. became God's temple

and the Spirit of God lived in him/her,

with reverence we bless his/her mortal body.

Then one member of the family may say:

With God there is mercy and fullness of redemption;

let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father...

Then this prayer is said:

Into your hands, O Lord,

we humbly entrust our brother/sister N.

In this life you embraced him/her with your tender love;

deliver him/her now from every evil

and bid him/her enter eternal rest.

The old order has passed away:

welcome him/her then into paradise,

where there will be no sorrow, no weeping nor pain,

but the fullness of peace and joy
with your Son and the Holy Spirit
forever and ever.

R/. Amen.

All may sign the forehead of the deceased with the Sign of the Cross. One member of the family says:

Blessed are those who have died in the Lord;

let them rest from their labors
for their good deeds go with them.

V/. Eternal rest grant unto him/her, O Lord.

R/. And let perpetual light shine upon him/her.

V/. May he/she rest in peace.

R/. Amen.

V/. May his/her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed,

through the mercy of God,

rest in peace.

R/. Amen.

All make the Sign of the Cross as one member of the family says:

May the love of God and the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ

bless and console us

and gently wipe every tear from our eyes:

in the name of the Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R/. Amen.

Prayers for Mourners

Lord God,

you are attentive to the voice of our pleading.

Let us find in your Son

comfort in our sadness,

certainty in our doubt,

and courage to live through this hour.

Make our faith strong

through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.

Lord,

N. is gone now from this earthly dwelling,

and has left behind those who mourn his/her absence.

Grant that we may hold his/her memory dear,

never bitter for what we have lost

nor in regret for the past,

but always in hope of the eternal Kingdom

where you will bring us together again.

Through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.

May the love of God and the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ

bless and console us

and gently wipe every tear from our eyes:

in the name of the Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R/. Amen.

For those who mourn the death of a child:

O Lord, whose ways are beyond understanding,

listen to the prayers of your faithful people:

that those weighed down by grief

at the loss of this little child

may find reassurance in your infinite goodness.

Through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.

Prayers at Graveside

Lord Jesus Christ,

by your own three days in the tomb,

you hallowed the graves of all who believe in you

and so made the grave a sign of hope

that promises resurrection

even as it claims our mortal bodies.

Grant that our brother/sister, N., may
sleep here in peace

until you awaken him/her to glory,
for you are the resurrection and the life.

Then he/she will see you face to face
and in your light will see light
and know the splendor of God,
for you live and reign forever and ever.

R/. Amen.

O God,
by whose mercy the faithful departed
find rest,
send your holy Angel to watch over this
grave.

Through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.

Scriptural and Catechetical References

Anointing with Oil

Throughout the Bible, various references indicate the importance of olive oil in daily life. Oil was used in cooking, particularly in the making of bread, that

basic food substance for nourishment (e.g. Nm 11:7-9); as a fuel for lamps (e.g. Mt 25:1-9); and as a healing agent in medicine (e.g. Is 1:6 and Lk 10:34). Moreover, with oil the Jews anointed the head of a guest as a sign of welcome (e.g. Lk 7:46), beautified one's appearance (e.g. Ru 3:3) and prepared a body for burial (e.g. Mk 16:1).

In religious practices, the Jews also used oil to offer sacrifices (e.g. Ex 29:40); to dedicate a memorial stone in honor of God (e.g. Gn 28:18); and to consecrate the meeting tent, the ark of the covenant, the table, the lampstand, the laver, the altar of incense, and the altar of holocausts (e.g. Ex 31:26-29). The use of oil was clearly a part of the daily life of the people.

Sacred Scripture also attests to the spiritual symbolism of oil. For instance, Psalm 23:5 reads, "You anoint my head with oil," signifying favor and strength from the Lord; and Psalm 45:8 reads, "You love justice and hate wickedness; therefore, God your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellow kings," signifying the special designation from God and the joy of being His servant. Moreover, to be "the

anointed” of the Lord indicated receiving a special vocation from the Lord and the empowerment with the Holy Spirit to fulfill that vocation: Jesus, echoing the words of Isaiah, spoke, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore, He has anointed me” (Lk 4:18). St. Paul emphasized this point, “God is the one Who firmly establishes us along with you in Christ; it is He Who anointed us and has sealed us, thereby depositing the first payment, the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor 1:21). Therefore, the symbolism of oil is rich sanctification, healing, strengthening, beautification, dedication, consecration, and sacrifice.

Given this heritage, the early Church adopted the use of olive oil for its sacramental rituals. The Oil of Catechumens is used in connection with the sacrament of baptism. St. Hippolytus, in his Apostolic Tradition (A.D. 215), wrote of an “oil of exorcism” used to anoint the candidates immediately before baptism. This practice continues: In the current baptismal liturgy, the priest offers the prayer of exorcism and then with the oil of catechumens anoints the person to be baptized on the chest, saying, “We

anoint you with the oil of salvation in the name of Christ our Savior; may He strengthen you with His power, Who lives and reigns forever and ever.”

Anointing with the oil of catechumens following a prayer of exorcism may also take place during the period of the catechumenate on one or several occasions. In both cases this anointing symbolizes the person’s need for the help and strength of God to sever the bondage of the past and to overcome the opposition of the devil so that he may profess his faith, come to baptism and live as a child of God.

The oil of the infirm is used in the sacrament of the anointing of the sick (formerly known as extreme unction). St. James wrote, “Is there anyone sick among you? He should ask for the priests of the Church. They in turn are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. This prayer uttered in faith will reclaim the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him to health. If he has committed any sins, forgiveness will be his” (Jas 5:14-15).

Traditions

The Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus recorded one of the earliest formulas for blessing the oil of the infirm. Also, in the early Church, a priest (or several priests) would bless this oil at the time it was to be used, a tradition that has been retained in the Eastern Churches.

However, in the Latin Rite, at least since the time of the Middle Ages, priests have used oil blessed by the bishop; for instance, St. Boniface in 730 ordered all priests in Germany to use the oil of the infirm blessed by bishops only.

Presently, the priest, anointing the forehead of the person, says, "Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in His love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit," and then anointing his hands, says, "May the Lord who frees you from sin, save you and raise you up." Another body part may also be anointed if the hands are not accessible or if there is another particular need.

Holy Chrism

Finally, holy chrism is a mixture of olive oil and balsam, an aromatic resin. This oil is linked with the sanctification of individuals. In the Old Testament times, the priest, prophets and kings of the Jewish people were anointed. This oil is

used in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and holy orders, since they impart an indelible sacramental character. The blessing of the holy chrism is different from that of the other oils: Here the bishop breathes over the vessel of chrism, a gesture which symbolizes both the Holy Spirit coming down to consecrate this oil, and the life-giving, sanctifying nature of the sacraments for which it is used. (Recall how our Lord “breathed” on the Apostles on the night of Easter, saying, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (Jn 20:22).) The concelebrants at the Chrism Mass also extend their right hands toward the chrism as the bishop says the consecratory prayer, signifying that in union with their bishop they share “in the authority by which Christ Himself builds up and sanctifies and rules His Body,” the Church (Vatican II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, No. 2).

Oil and Baptism

Regarding baptism, St. Hippolytus in the Apostolic Tradition spoke of an anointing after the actual baptism with the “oil of thanksgiving.” Similarly, right after the actual baptism in the present rite, the priest anoints the person on the crown of

the head with chrism, saying, “God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin and given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit. He now anoints with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King, so may you live always as a member of His body, sharing everlasting life. Amen.”

Oil and Confirmation

In the sacrament of confirmation, the bishop anoints the forehead of the candidate with chrism saying, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Sacred chrism is also used in the sacrament of holy orders. In the ordination rite of a priest, the bishop anoints with chrism the palms of each new priest. In the ordination rite of a bishop, the consecrating bishop anoints the head of the new bishop.

Finally, holy chrism is used in the dedication ceremony of a church. Here the bishop anoints the altar, pouring holy chrism on the middle of the altar and on each of its four corners. It is recommended that the bishop anoint the entire altar. After anointing the altar, he

anoints the walls of the church in 12 or four places marked by crosses.

As our bishop blesses these three oils at the Chrism Mass this year, our hearts turn to our gracious Lord who bestows His infinite love and mercy to us through these sacraments. Let us also pray for our bishop and the priests who are the ministers of the sacraments in the parish, that they may be the humble and generous servants of the Lord.

Anointing of the Sick

Jesus came to heal the whole person, body, and soul.

In the Church's Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, through the ministry of the priest, it is Jesus who touches the sick to heal them from sin - and sometimes even from physical ailment. His cures were signs of the arrival of the Kingdom of God. The core message of his healing tells us of his plan to conquer sin and death by his dying and rising.

The Rite of Anointing tells us there is no need to wait until a person is at the point of death to receive the Sacrament. A careful judgment about the serious nature of the illness is sufficient.

When the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is given, the hoped-for effect is that, if it be God's will, the person be physically healed of illness. But even if there is no physical healing, the primary effect of the Sacrament is a spiritual healing by which the sick person receives the Holy Spirit's gift of peace and courage to deal with the difficulties that accompany serious illness or the frailty of old age.

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